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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 35 SEPT. 19, 2005

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World youth festival: forum for defending Venezuela, Cuba

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Northwest strikers seek solidarity to beat back union-busting attack

BY NELSON GONZALEZ

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—More than 1,000 unionists rallied here August 27 in solidarity with the mechanics, cleaners, and custodians who are on strike against Northwest Airlines. They came loaded with boxes of food and other donations. Strikers from the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) were joined by members of the Teamsters, Professional Flight Attendants Association (PFAA), Carpenters Union, and others. A good number of those present were retired mechanics.

The strike, which began August 19, was provoked by the company's union-busting drive to impose a contract that would cut 2,000 jobs—half of the workforce—reduce wages by 25 percent, freeze pensions, and increase the subcontracting of mechanics work.

Making clear its antiunion objectives, Northwest announced August 25 that it was prepared to operate "indefinitely" with replacement workers and was considering giving permanent jobs to 1,500 strikebreakers it is using as a temporary workforce. The company said it can do this under the antiunion Railway Labor Act.

It is not all smooth sailing for the company, however. One week into the strike, Northwest admitted that,

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Militant/ Jacob Perasso

Flight attendants join August 27 rally at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport in solidarity with the 4,400 striking members of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association.

San Francisco: SWP candidates back Northwest Airlines strikers

BY BETSEY STONE

SAN FRANCISCO—Three Socialist Workers Party candidates—Romina Green for San Francisco Treasurer, Laura Anderson for City Attorney, and Gerardo Sánchez for Assessor-Recorder—launched their election campaigns here this week by building support for the 4,400 striking mechanics, cleaners, and custodians at Northwest Airlines organized by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA).

Supporters of the campaign have

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New York City, Sunday, September 11

Four Years Later: Resisting U.S. Rulers' Global Assault on Workers and Farmers

- ❖ **Organizing and using union power: the contradictions building in the U.S. today**
- ❖ **Iraq and the 'global war on terrorism': the deepening crisis of the imperialist world order**
- ❖ **Cuba, Caracas, and Washington: the sharpening conflict in the Americas**

Jack Barnes national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party

Jacob Perasso Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of St. Paul; member of UFCW Local 789; recently returned from Caracas world youth festival

Norton Sandler and Arrin Hawkins event co-chairpeople

Mary-Alice Waters president, Pathfinder Press; just returned from research trip to Cuba

Alyson Kennedy member of UMWA Local-9957-in-becoming at Co-Op mine in Utah and defendant in coal bosses' retaliatory lawsuit

Bill Estrada and Dave Prince on taking advantage of expanding political opportunities

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U.S. Gulf Coast: social disaster unfolds in wake of hurricane

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which slammed into the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama August 29, a social disaster is unfolding in the region. The catastrophe is of massive proportions in New Orleans, a city of half a million people, and surrounding areas. According to news reports, thousands of people may be dead, and the toll is rising. Up to a million people have been left homeless.

Signaling disregard for the plight facing working people trapped in New Orleans, government authorities declared a state of emergency to deploy additional cops and an armed personnel carrier to stop "looters." These are largely working people deprived of food and drinking water who are seeking basic goods to survive in the absence of timely government aid.

Prior to Katrina hitting New Orleans,

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Expand labor support for Militant Fighting Fund

Everyone who supports the Militant Fighting Fund has an opportunity to build on the successful work that raised nearly $70,000 to cover expenses in the fight against a harassment lawsuit by C.W. Mining Co. The challenge now is to campaign to expand support in the union movement in defense of labor

EDITORIAL

rights, free speech, and freedom of the press.

Unable to defeat the coal miners who have been waging a two-year-long battle to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America at its Co-Op mine in Utah, the company lashed out

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Iraqi National Assembly sends draft constitution to popular vote in October 9

Workers have stake in defending science

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

AS I SEE IT

The campaign to undermine the teaching of science in schools—under the cover of promoting "intelligent design," a "balanced view" of evolution, or other repackaged versions of creationism—has suffered repeated setbacks. At the same time, working people need to take seriously this reactionary campaign, which is used to defend the capitalist status quo, and answer it wherever and whenever it is raised.

Workers and farmers have a stake in defending a scientific, materialist approach to nature as well as to society. This is necessary to understand the world and be able to fight effectively to change it in the interests of the vast majority.

For decades, forces seeking to push back the teaching of science and promote biblical myths about the origins of life have been waging this reactionary campaign in various forms. This is part of the effort by rightists to foster irrational ideas and obscurantism in order to promote anti-working-class solutions to the sharpening social crisis caused by capitalism. They play on the insecurity and fears of middle-class and other layers, decrying the "decadence" of society and "loss of moral values." Those who benefit from these ideological campaigns are the wealthy capitalist rulers.

While reactionary forces have been forced to concede many of the advances of science, their target remains the materialist approach. *Materialism* maintains that nature alone, based on matter in motion, has a self-sufficient existence. Everything in human life is derived from and dependent on the objective world.

The opposite view is *idealism*, which denies that nature is primary, making it subordinate to mind or spirit.

Religious and other idealistic—that is, antiscientific—notions obfuscate an understanding of the development of human society and the modern class struggle. They are used to try to convince working people that we are the objects, not the subjects, of history; that there must be a "plan," a supernatural creator, to whose goals we should submit rather than rely on our own actions to take control of our destiny.

First explained by Charles Darwin in the book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the evolution of animals and plants by natural selection has been amply confirmed since then by scientific investigation of the fossil record, anatomy, and genetic evidence.

The battle to advance this scientific understanding of nature has made great strides over the past decades. It's worth recalling that until the late 1960s, several states still had laws on their books forbidding the teaching of evolution.

But the mass movement for Black rights in the 1950s and '60s led to important gains for the working class as a whole. Under the impact of those gains, the Supreme Court in 1968 issued a ruling that struck down an Arkansas statute banning the teaching of evolution in the schools.

Placed increasingly on the defensive, rightist forces pitched their case as demanding equal time to present their challenge to the study of evolution. Packaged as "creation science," they campaigned to include this assault on science in the public schools.

However, these forces suffered a further blow when the Supreme Court in 1987 struck down Louisiana's "Creation Act," ruling that teaching creationism in public schools is unconstitutional.

This led rightists such as those from the Seattle-based Discovery Institute to peddle "intelligent design"—what Leonard Krishtalka, director of the Natural History Museum at the University of Kansas, aptly called "creationism in a cheap tuxedo." Unable to make much headway, these forces have adjusted their arguments once again. Rather than openly advocate the teaching of "intelligent design," they are pushing to introduce "questions" about evolution into school syllabuses under the banner of "Teach the controversy." This issue is being fought out today in the school systems in 20 states.

Forcing creationism into the curriculum makes a mockery of scientific study. As the late Stephen Jay Gould, a leading defender of Darwinian evolution, put it, teaching biology without evolution is "like teaching English but making grammar optional."

The political limits on how far these right-wing forces can push today is a registration of long-term trends that have strengthened the working class. An article in *New International* no. 12 titled, "Their Transformation and Ours," explains that the trend toward the separation of religion and religious institutions from politics and the state "continues to advance hand in hand with the worldwide spread of capitalism and the consequent expansion of the proletariat. The hold of religious beliefs on the political behavior of the toilers also continues to decline. Whatever the religious affiliations of hundreds of millions of toilers worldwide, it is not religious bigotry but the proletarian habits of mutual trust, tolerance, and class solidarity that working people learn in the course of common struggles."

It's working people, not the representatives of capitalism, who are the bearers of culture and science in the march forward of humanity.

UK Gate Gourmet workers fight firings

BY JOYCE FAIRCHILD

LONDON—"What do we want? Justice," chanted a group of members of the Transport and General Workers' Union, protesting their dismissal by airline catering company Gate Gourmet. Around 300 workers, supporters, and family members attended the August 28 event, held at what has become a daily protest site here near Heathrow Airport.

Roger Dillon, part of a delegation of workers from Ford Dagenham Motor Works, brought a donation of £1,000 (US$1,796) from their union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), and said they planned to do a bucket collection in the factory. "If they are allowed to get away with this, other companies will be looking to do the same. That's why we came to give support," stated Dillon.

Brendan Gold, the TGWU's national secretary for civil aviation, informed the crowd that the union would send a delegation to the United States to talk to workers at Gate Gourmet facilities there, which are organized by the UNITE-HERE and Teamster unions.

Some 800 catering workers were fired August 10 when 200 of them walked off the job to hold a union meeting.

In response, 1,000 baggage handlers and other workers at British Airways held a sympathy strike for more than 24 hours, grounding all of the airline's Heathrow flights, affecting 70,000 passengers.

Gate Gourmet and the TGWU agreed August 25 on the outline of an agreement that offered the sacked workers voluntary redundancy (layoff) with a compensation payment. The voluntary unemployment, however, could be followed by compulsory redundancies.

Gate Gourmet boss David Siegel warned, "The hardliners and militants are never coming back."

Jagjeet Bhamra, who has worked at Gate Gourmet for six years and whose wife has worked there nine years, expressed the opinion of many workers interviewed by the *Militant* when he said, "When we are all back at work, then the union can have further discussions on redundancies and compensation." He added, "Who are the troublemakers? We are all 'troublemakers'—they are trying to break the union."

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Northwest Airlines strike

Continued from front page

despite earlier claims that the job action had barely disrupted flights, "its operations were badly fouled up at the beginning of the strike," the *New York Times* reported. Flight problems are still significantly higher than Northwest experienced last year at this time, according to FlightStats, an airline consulting firm.

Northwest executive Andrew Roberts reported that as of August 25 the airline still had delays affecting 30 percent of its flights as compared to 21 percent a year ago. On the first day of the strike the airline had to cancel more than 8 percent of its flights, five times the industry average, although a few days later this had dropped to 1.8 percent.

Some individual ramp workers and flight attendants at Northwest have been visiting the strikers' picket lines to show their solidarity, and a few have been honoring the picket lines, despite the fact that the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and Professional Flight Attendants Association have told their members to cross the line. In Minneapolis-St. Paul, Machinists joining the picket lines told the *Militant* that a few IAM members here have invoked article 26 of the contract, protecting their right not to cross the line. They report that the company has threatened them, saying they are on "furlough."

'Get out here and support this fight'

Peggy Lubinski, a flight attendant here who was fired for refusing to cross the picket line, spoke at the August 27 rally. She received a sustained ovation. In an appeal to fellow members of the PFAA and other unionists, she urged, "Don't cross the picket line. You need to get other jobs and get out here and support this fight—you need to walk, right now!"

She added, "In the same way that Northwest prepared for 18 months to replace the mechanics, they are preparing our replacements right now. They've got 1,300 ready right now and are organizing to replace all 2,500 of us. You need to walk right now or there won't be a PFAA with any members to go back to."

Referring to the pilots, Lubinski said, "Shame on you. They should be here."

Northwest is seeking $107 million in annual concessions from the IAM as well as $143 million from the PFAA, including a 20 percent pay cut. Playing on the divisions between the IAM and AMFA, the company has promised to shift some of the aircraft cleaning tasks from AMFA cleaners to IAM-organized ground workers. IAM officials have said they are asking Northwest to get even more struck work handed to their members.

Also speaking at the solidarity rally, Dave Foster, president of District 11 of the United Steelworkers union, reminded the crowd of similar corporate attacks against steelworkers in Minnesota's Iron Range in the 1980s and pledged his support.

Kip Hedges, former president of IAM Local 1833 and one of the baggage handlers who have refused to cross the picket line here, said, "Northwest is trying to break all the unions on Northwest property. If we don't stick together we're dead."

PFAA president Guy Meek described the harassment by Northwest bosses of any flight attendants who document and file incident reports that indicate the need for aircraft maintenance.

Omar Jamal, executive director of the Somali Justice Advocacy Center, received sustained applause when he explained his organization's efforts to reach out to the Somali community through flyers and meetings to win support for the strike.

Earlier that week, at picket lines along the driveway leading to a hangar where Vance Security and the cops are escorting in scabs, striking mechanic Bruce McGee told the *Militant* that Northwest is using temp agencies to recruit some Somali workers as custodians and cleaners.

Jamal told the crowd, "We are with you, we will not let Northwest take advantage of immigrant workers."

Ted Ludwig, president of AMFA Local 33, which sponsored the rally, said, "A successful strike by us will give strength to other workers who have been taking it on the chin for quite a while now. We're doing the right thing as long as we don't cross the picket line."

Noting that not one striker has crossed the line, he said, "I admire and respect the cleaners and the custodians for coming out with us. We will all get our jobs back and go in together." He pointed out that prior to the strike Northwest had tried to entice these workers into crossing the lines by promising them a supposedly generous severance package.

An announcement was made at the rally that three locals of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees planned a picket line next to a hotel to protest scabs being housed there. That action took place August 30.

At the San Francisco airport, the 20 mechanics on the picket line have been joined by many United Airline workers and Northwest flight attendants, as well as members of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

On September 5 at 11:00 a.m., a Labor Day rally will be held at the San Francisco airport in solidarity with the Northwest strikers. It will be take place at Terminal 2, the old International Terminal.

At some airports, American Airline workers, who are members of the Transport Workers Union, have joined the picket lines.

Betsey Stone in San Francisco contributed to this article.

Protesters in Texas demand freedom for Cuban Five, extradition of Posada Carriles



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

EL PASO, Texas—A dozen people protested in front of the U.S. Immigration detention center here August 29, demanding the extradition of CIA-trained mass murderer Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela. Posada, 77, has a long record of carrying out violent activity against the Cuban Revolution, including the mid-air bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976 that killed 73 people. On the first day of a hearing on Posada Carriles' request for political asylum, Judge William Abbott found him deportable. The protest was called by the ANSWER Coalition, National Network on Cuba, and other groups. Protesters also demanded freedom for the Cuban Five—Cuban revolutionists framed-up and imprisoned on charges of "conspiracy" to commit espionage for Havana. On August 9, a federal appeals court threw out the convictions of the five and ordered a new trial. U.S. government prosecutors have asked the court for more time to respond to the ruling.

—JACQUIE HENDERSON

Socialist Workers Party candidates back strikers

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joined the picket lines at the San Francisco airport and helped sell 138 copies of the *Militant* with the editorial urging "Solidarity with the Northwest strike."

"The number one task of every trade union and every unionist today is organizing solidarity actions to help the strikers beat back the company's offensive," said Romina Green, a garment worker. "The road to strengthening the union movement is for workers to enlist support from their locals for the strike and help bring fellow union members and others to the picket lines. To allow the bosses to pit the International Association of Machinists (IAM) against AMFA over representation of mechanics and other workers is the road to disaster for labor. Every working person in North America and worldwide should honor the Northwest strikers' picket lines."

On Friday, August 26, workers at the large United Airlines maintenance base in San Francisco purchased 63 copies of the *Militant* at the afternoon shift change. Another 15 workers bought the paper at the night shift change on August 30. Several said everyone should go on strike.

On August 27, airline workers bought 25 copies of the paper on the picket line and at the parking lot across from Northwest Cargo.

Many workers at Northwest, United, and other airlines who are members of the IAM told the socialist campaigners they were opposed to the stand taken by top IAM officials against the strike.

Kathryn Sides, a Northwest ticket agent and long-time IAM member, said she plans to attend the rally to build solidarity for the strike at the airport on Labor Day. Her view of the brutal attack on mechanics and other airline workers was expressed in a button on her uniform that said in big letters, "It Ain't Right!"

Workers were glad to see the coverage in the *Militant* of the recent strike in the United Kingdom where airline workers shut down British Airways in solidarity with fired caterers at Gate Gourmet (see article on page 9). "What they did was great," said Northwest mechanic Jim Erb. "This should be happening here."

Erb, a veteran of the 1989–91 Eastern airlines strike, had to move to San Francisco from Atlanta to keep his job after Northwest shut down the maintenance base there in 2001. Now he says he faces losing his job here.

A United Airlines ramp worker, on a break at the international terminal, expressed dismay that the IAM and AMFA were not united against company attacks. He pointed to an area in the front of the terminal where he said he remembered joining in a solidarity demonstration with other United workers and Eastern strikers, both baggage handlers and mechanics.

Two American Airlines mechanics, members of the Transportation Workers Union, were especially welcoming of the *Militant* editorial calling for a united stand against Northwest. They made that remark when asked if they had refused to do struck work.

A number of workers made donations to the paper or bought multiple copies to pass along to co-workers and friends.

Workers at the Local 10 hiring hall of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union expressed pride in their unions' staunch support of the Northwest strike. Several said they had joined the picket line at the airport.

At the center of the Socialist Workers campaign is supporting struggles to organize trade unions and to mobilize and extend union power to defend working people against the bosses' attacks on wages and job conditions. A leaflet passed out by the SWP campaigners here invites workers to a Labor Day weekend "Meet the Candidates" open house, on Saturday, September 3, where discussion over how to resist the employers' attacks will continue.

❖

Socialist Workers Party candidates and their supporters have been campaigning similarly and selling dozens of copies of last week's *Militant* to airline and other workers. In Minneapolis/St. Paul, SWP campaigners sold 78 copies of the paper the last five days; and in Chicago they sold 66 copies of the same issue.

Social disaster after hurricane

Continued from front page
government authorities urged a major evacuation, which they later said was mandatory. Those relying on public transportation were largely stranded, with more than 20,000 taking shelter in the Superdome football stadium and thousands of others remaining trapped in their homes.

Those with cars who could afford the gas prices left the city—some 80 percent of New Orleans residents. But they were on their own to figure out where to go or stay overnight, with many unable to find hotel rooms or running out of funds.

"There's nowhere, nowhere to go. There's nowhere to eat, get gas or stay," truck driver Robert Smith told a *Miami Herald* reporter. Smith, who left New Orleans with his family of six, ended up stranded on Interstate 10 near Gulfport, Mississippi.

According to Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco, who was interviewed on the August 30 CNN television program "Larry King Live," commercial airlines stopped flying into New Orleans a day before Katrina hit because they would lose money without any passengers coming in, even though the airline companies could have sent planes to evacuate people for another 24 hours. Neither the state nor the federal governments took steps to ensure the commercial flights continued or to use military aircraft in their place.

The biggest direct impact of the hurricane was on working-class areas in eastern New Orleans. An estimated 40,000 homes were flooded in St. Bernard Parish in that part of the city. As water levels rose individuals were forced to take refuge in attics and on their roofs.

In Mississippi, the town of Gulfport is virtually gone and Biloxi has been severely damaged. More than 100 are reported dead in these two areas. The death toll, however, is expected to be much higher once bodies buried by debris or under water are discovered.

The day after Katrina hit two levees burst in New Orleans, submerging 80 percent of the city in a swamp of dirty water, as deep as 20 feet in some areas, according to New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin. On August 31 he estimated thousands have likely died in the city. These levees were not built strong enough to withstand the impact of a major hurricane.

Across Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama more than 1 million people are without electricity. Power companies predict it could be up to two months before service is fully restored. In New Orleans residents have been told not to drink the water. The water flooding the streets there includes chemical and natural gas leaks, animal carcasses, and human corpses.

Some 3,000 people have been rescued by boat and air lifts as of August 31, reported Louisiana Lt. Gov. Mitchell Landrieu. The rising death toll in the city is still unknown as boats were bypassing the floating dead bodies to reach the thousands still stranded in flooded homes, attics, and rooftops. "Officials said it could be weeks, if not months, before most evacuees will be able to return," reported the *Washington Post.*

Those who took shelter in the Superdome have faced unhealthy, sweltering conditions, with holes in the roof, no electricity or air conditioning, and inadequate toilet facilities. On August 31 Louisiana governor Blanco ordered the evacuation of the Superdome within two days. The dome is now surrounded by three feet of water. The *Houston Chronicle* reported that a plan has been worked out to ship the 23,000 people confined there to the Astrodome in Houston.

A good part of the government's response has been aimed at minimizing "looting." On August 30, the Pentagon ordered five Navy ships and eight maritime rescue teams to the Gulf Coast. The amphibious assault ship the *Bataan* with six Sea Stallion and Sea hawk helicopters is en route from Texas. A special command center has been set up at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, to coordinate the Pentagon's rescue and "law and order" operations in the area. Some 4,000 Army and Air Force National Guard personnel have been sent to Louisiana.

In Mississippi, 1,600 members of the state National Guard unit have been deployed. "I have instructed the Highway Patrol and the National Guard to treat looters ruthlessly," said Mississippi governor Haley Barbour.

The employers and the government are using the catastrophe to push for acceptance of even higher fuel prices. Oil prices shot up above $70 a barrel at the end of August, with gas prices at the pump hitting $3 a gallon. The hurricane shut down most of the oil and gas operations in the Gulf region, which account for nearly a third of domestic oil production and a fifth of natural gas output. According to Bloomberg News, this includes at least eight U.S. refineries with the capacity to produce about 1.8 million barrels of oil per day, more than 10 percent of the nation's total.

The response to Katrina by U.S. state and federal authorities contrasts sharply with that of the government of Cuba, which has been far more successful in organizing mass evacuations and minimizing the human toll during similar hurricanes and other natural disasters. In preparation for Hurricane Ivan, which hit the Caribbean island in September 2004, the Cuban government evacuated and organized lodging for nearly 1.9 million people. Many were evacuated along with their household possessions. As a result, no one died when Ivan hit Cuba.

Hurricane Dennis—a category IV storm like Katrina when it made landfall in Louisiana—slammed into Cuba in July. At that point, 1.5 million people were evacuated to safer ground. Sixteen individuals died from the impact of that storm.



AFP/Getty Images/James Nielson

Residents of a working-class neighborhood in New Orleans wade through flooded streets August 29 after hurricane.

Militant Fighting Fund: focus on labor support

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY—After a successful campaign that raised nearly $70,000 for legal and publicity expenses to fight a harassment lawsuit by the Co-Op mine owners, supporters of the Militant Fighting Fund are concentrating on expanding union support for this important labor defense case.

"With new motions to dismiss the case recently filed by the *Militant*, *Salt Lake Tribune,* and *Deseret Morning News*, a court hearing is expected early this fall," said Norton Sandler, an organizer of the Militant Fighting Fund campaign. "For the next six to eight weeks, defenders of labor rights, free speech, and freedom of the press have an opportunity to reach out broadly in the trade union movement and ask for support."

The newest endorser of the Militant Fighting Fund is Ed Mayne, president of the Utah AFL-CIO who himself is a defendant in the Co-Op lawsuit. Mayne introduced the defense campaign at an executive board meeting of the Utah AFL-CIO last month and said he encouraged the union officials present "to support the miners, the UMWA, and the *Militant.*

C.W. Mining, owners of the Co-Op mine here, and its allied International Association of United Workers Union, are suing the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 16 individual Co-Op miners, trade unions that have supported the miners, and newspapers that have covered the union-organizing struggle.

"Trade union locals, labor officials, and workers across the country who sign on as endorsers of the Militant Fighting Fund are doing so to give support to the miners and the UMWA in the nearly two-year-long battle at Co-Op," said Sandler. "At the same time they are defending the right of a newspaper published in the interests of working people to cover what the miners and their supporters have to say about the struggle to win a union, and secure decent pay and working conditions."

The *Militant* is a target in the C.W. Mining lawsuit because of its weekly coverage of this fight and its editorial support for the miners' struggle. The coal bosses' suit cites 75 *Militant* articles and editorials as "defamatory."

Already, three union locals have endorsed the Militant Fighting Fund: International Longshore and Warehouse Local 10 in San Francisco; United Steel Workers Local 12-578 at the Flying J and Holly refineries near Salt Lake City; and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3800 in Minneapolis. The Toronto and York Regional Labor Council in Canada has also endorsed.

Those interested in the progress of the campaign can download the weekly updated endorser list on the *Militant*'s website, at *www.themilitant.com.*

World youth festival delegates back Utah miners' fight for union

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

CARACAS, Venezuela—"In the difficult moments of battle, don't back off. Don't back off and fight like we're fighting here." These words are from a solidarity message to the Co-Op coal miners signed by Camilo Arias, a Venezuelan youth who attended the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students here. He was among more than 1,000 participants who received information on the 23-month-long fight by Co-Op miners to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in Huntington, Utah.

A stand at the festival's Friendship Fair illustrated the labor battle through photo displays, newspaper clippings, and a scrapbook. Supporters of the union-organizing struggle staffed the booth during the festival.

A member of the executive board of one of Venezuela's oil workers' unions stopped by the stand. After reading information on the struggle, he brought back two of his fellow unionists to learn about the fight and to take a picture in front of the stand, holding a sign that said "Solidarity with the Co-Op Coal Miners in Utah, USA."

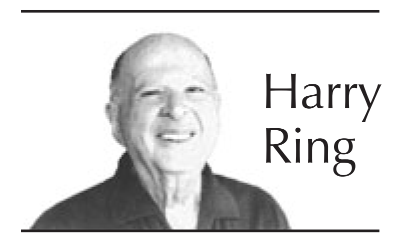
Venezuelan TV interviewed Co-Op miner Bill Estrada, who attended the festival. "I spoke about this labor battle and explained the solidarity we were winning from fellow fighters in many different countries," Estrada said. After learning about the fight, delegates of the Bangladesh Youth Union took a stack of flyers on the Co-Op struggle to distribute from their table.

A member of the executive board of the public workers' union in Venezuela stopped by the stand. His union would be entering into contract negotiations later this month and they will demand higher wages and benefits. "Our fights can reinforce each other," he remarked.

Two members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining, and Energy Union of Australia who attended the festival donated union T-shirts and stickers for the Co-Op miners' raffle in the August 21 solidarity picnic in Utah.

Several people wrote solidarity messages on the spot. Delegates also donated $65 for the Co-Op miners' struggle.

On a good track—In early August, Gallup poll-takers in south Korea interviewed youth on what they would do if



Washington attacked north Korea. In response, 65.9 percent of military age youth—male and female—said they would support north Korea.

India's bright capitalist future—The government of India is considering a jobs program for the rural poor. That's evoked warnings that it can't afford a program in the billions. The utopian plan favors a wage of $1.40 a day for 100 days a year. Out of a population of a billion, some 700 million people are in rural areas and half are impoverished. Declared a government job-holder: "I cannot say that rural areas will turn into heaven."

Thieves in the night—Meeting secretly at night, July 7, the members of the Pennsylvania legislature used a little-known loophole to vote themselves well-padded raises. That done, they left on their customary two-month vacation. The rank-and-file solons received a 16 percent hike in their pay to $81,050 a year. Senior legislators took a 34 percent increase to $145,553. They sweat an average 77 session days a year. The swindle evoked sharp public anger.

Hospitals for recovery?—A hospital worker responded to the item we wrote about the number of infection deaths in hospitals. He had data on medical deaths in hospitals caused by errors. He cites data from the National Academy of Sciences stating that about 98,000 people die each year from errors in hospitals. The reader comments, "Society has the conception that hospitals are the places where patients recover from injuries or illnesses. The facts are that legions of hospitals are the most dangerous places to be in the U.S."

Cop spotted gun?—"Rangeley, Maine—Police shot a 200-pound black bear after it charged an officer who tried to scare it out of town. Several bears have been spotted recently wandering downtown streets, hanging around the ice cream parlor and rummaging through garbage."—News item.

Why not a guest speaker from the Flat Earth Society?—Rio Rancho, New Mexico—"A policy adopted by the school board allows alternative theories to evolution to be discussed in Rio Rancho's public school science classes. Peter Simonson, head of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico, said the policy is aimed at teaching 'intelligent design.' Critics call it religion masquerading as science."—News item.

Black farmers demand moratorium on foreclosures

BY SAM MANUEL

EPES, Alabama—Farmers involved in struggles against racial discrimination in government loans and other services discussed how to advance their fight at the 38th annual meeting of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives August 19–20.

Participants in the meeting unanimously supported a resolution demanding a moratorium on foreclosures by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) against farmers who have been victims of the agency's racist policies.

About 100 farmers and their supporters attended the meeting of the federation, which was formed as part of the fight for civil rights in the 1960s and to back farmers who are Black fighting to hold onto their land. Farmers at the gathering came from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas.

"They don't pay any attention to the small farmer," said Shelton Cooper, 58, from Louisville, Mississippi. "By the time they get around to us they have spent all the money on the big farmers," he said in summing up his experience with the Department of Agriculture. Cooper has managed to purchase 20 head of cattle and wants to break into cattle farming. He has not heard anything from the USDA regarding the loan he applied for over a year ago in order to expand his herd and acreage. Cooper said he had come to the meeting to get some help in his fight.

David Jefferson, 61, also from Louisville, grows a variety of vegetables on a 40-acre farm. He was denied a loan in 1979 and never received an explanation. "Nothing is going to change as long as the same people who discriminate are still in charge," said Jefferson. He said he was not surprised to find that so many farmers had their claims of discrimination denied by the government.

Jefferson was referring to the 1999 settlement of the *Pigford v. Glickman* class action suit by farmers against racist discrimination by the USDA. Daniel Glickman was U.S. secretary of agriculture in the Clinton administration. The settlement provided a tax-exempt $50,000 payment to those who could provide minimal proof of discrimination, and forgiveness of outstanding debts owed to the USDA. It also promised these farmers priority on future loan requests.

During a panel on the *Pigford* case, attorney Rose Sanders said only 13,000 claims have been approved. Another 65,000 were denied on the grounds that they were filed late. The Federation is lobbying Congress to pass legislation that would allow those cases to be heard.

Federation director Ralph Paige told the meeting that "more than 500 Black farmers are under extreme threat of foreclosures that will result in the loss of 100,000 acres of farmland." Many of these farmers are claimants in *Pigford* whose claims of racial discrimination by the USDA were denied. Participants in the meeting voiced a resounding "aye!" in approving the resolution calling for a moratorium on foreclosures.

Vernon Parker, assistant secretary of agriculture for civil rights, told the meeting the USDA is taking steps to address farmers' concerns, including by appointing "minority advisers" to the department's field offices. He also touted a 2004 agreement signed between the USDA and Marriott International to purchase produce from these farmers for the hospitality industry.

Paige announced plans by the farmers to attend an August 25 "Listening Forum" on the 2007 farm bill at Tuskegee University, where Secretary of Agriculture Michael Johanns is scheduled to speak.



Militant/Jeanne Fitzmaurice

Farmers discuss struggle against racist discrimination by the government and fight to hold onto their land at August 19 meeting of Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

Sept. 19, 1980

Phoenix, Sept. 9—Union leaders representing 9,000 striking copper workers reached agreement on wage and benefit issues with the country's largest copper company, Kennecott, at the end of August. Today, the last of the local unions representing Kennecott workers, International Association of Machinists Lodge 568 at the giant complex outside Salt Lake City, voted to accept the local issues agreement. This ends the strike against Kennecott.

But 30,000 other copper workers remain on strike against nine other companies.

The settlement with Kennecott is a defeat for the company's takeback effort. The union members will retain their cost-of-living (COLA) quarterly raise, which Kennecott wanted to withhold.

This success of the copper strike contrasts with the same takeback that Steelworkers union officials agreed to in the basic steel contract negotiated last spring under a no-strike pledge.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

Sept. 19, 1955

Chicago, Sept.10—According to the Chicago Defender, a Negro weekly, approximately 250,000 people viewed the body of Emmett Louis Till as it lay in state for four days over the Labor Day weekend.

On August 28 Emmett Till, a Negro youth aged 14, was kidnapped and murdered in Money, Miss. His crime—he is supposed to have whistled at a white woman.

At first it was said the body looked too shocking for the casket to be opened for viewers. But Mrs. Bradley insisted that it be opened. "I want the world to see what they did to my boy," she said. The casket was opened. In reaction to the sight of the boy's body, thousands wept, hundreds fainted, many became hysterical.

The Negro people are aroused by the atrocities committed against them recently, such as the murders of Rev. George Lee and Lamar Smith, also in Mississippi. This pent-up resentment reached a high point with the murder of Emmett Louis Till.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

Sept. 15, 1930

Enough has occurred in the last few weeks to show on what basis the twin capitalist parties intend to conduct the election campaign: Prohibition—for and against!

The so-called prohibition issue is the best one that could be chosen—for the capitalist class. It conveniently cuts across party lines so that neither singly nor together can they be made responsible for anything. It is an expedient gas gun for shooting clouds around fundamental and really burning issues.

Is there mass unemployment, misery, starvation, suicide in the country? Booze will solve that! Are wages being cut to the very marrow? Booze will make the workers forget that! Is a form of social insurance needed by the workers? No, it's beer and light wines they need!

The dislike and total incapacity of the capitalist parties to face the real problems the masses are confronted with, are quite understandable. Republican or Democrat—they are the ramparts of the system that produces wars, unemployment, crises, and oppression with an ever-increasing frequency and permanency.

Youth festival: forum to defend Venezuela, Cuba



Militant/Maura DeLuca

Venezuelans get ID cards to attend literacy class in Puerto La Cruz, Anzoátegui state, August 12. Literacy programs are being organized with aid from Cuba. Youth festival delegates visited this and other cities.

BY JACOB PERASSO AND ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

CARACAS, Venezuela—The 16th World Festival of Youth and Students, held here August 7–15, was a forum on the fight against imperialist world domination and capitalist exploitation. Front and center before the 17,000 delegates were the escalating clashes in the looming confrontation between Venezuela and Cuba, on the one hand, and Washington and its allies on the other. Coming from 144 countries, delegates rallied to the defense of the strengthening alliance between Caracas and Havana.

Many delegates also got a glimpse of the class struggle in this country, where working people have defeated repeated attempts by sections of the capitalist class, with U.S. backing, to overthrow the government headed by President Hugo Chávez.

"Cuba, Venezuela, one single flag!" was the main slogan the 1,800-strong Cuban delegation chanted at the opening parade. Cuban and Venezuelan delegates promoted this theme throughout the eight-day event. In two speeches, on the opening night and at a conference on "Socialism in the 21st Century," and in testimony at the anti-imperialist tribunal, Chávez denounced threats against Venezuela and Cuba by U.S. imperialism. He also made it clear his government will expand collaboration with Cuba and other Caribbean countries, such as by selling oil below world market prices, while welcoming to Venezuela an increasing number of volunteers from Cuba.

Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, spoke along similar lines at the anti-imperialist tribunal—the festival's largest event.

Youth had many chances to discuss national liberation struggles. Two delegates from Puerto Rico testified at the anti-imperialist tribunal making the case for that nation's independence from U.S. colonial rule. (For more on the tribunal see "Caracas: youth at world festival pledge to defend Venezuela" in August 29 *Militant.*)

In a seminar titled "The Apartheid Wall," delegates from Israel, Nepal, Palestine, South Africa, and the United States condemned the occupation of Palestinian territories by Tel Aviv with the backing of Washington and its allies.

A workshop on Canadian imperialism featured Pierre George, a leader of the struggle for the rights of Natives in that country; Jessica Lyons of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, who spoke on the fight for immigrant rights; and Natalie Doucet of the Young Socialists. Doucet described the struggle for Quebec's independence as part of the line of march of the working class in that country to defeat Canadian imperialism, overthrow capitalism, and establish a workers and farmers government that would open the road to socialism. A young Quebecois and others from the audience also backed the fight for Quebec's independence.

Forces opposed to struggles for self-determination, however, made their voices heard too and disrupted one event.

Western Saharan delegates spoke several times about the fight to end the occupation of their country by the Moroccan regime—which Madrid, Paris, Washington, and other imperialist powers back. A forum featuring Haj Ahmed, the Saharawi ambassador to Venezuela, however, was disrupted by delegates from Morocco who provoked a fistfight. The Communist and Socialist parties of Morocco and their youth groups, which sent delegates to Caracas, side with that country's monarchy in opposing independence for Western Sahara.

At the festival's closing ceremony, a couple of delegates from Spain's Basque region waved signs demanding self-determination for the Basque people. They were opposed by members of the Spanish Communist Party who waved a large flag of that Spanish province, attempting to prevent the signs advocating Basque independence from being photographed by reporters.

An event on World War II titled "1945–2005: 60 years after the Anti-fascist Victory of the peoples, we continue the struggle against imperialism and war," was one of the most poorly attended major conferences of the festival. Scheduled to coincide with the closing of the anti-imperialist tribunal on August 14, while Chávez was testifying there, it was attended by a few hundred people.

Several delegations held bilateral meetings. About 200 delegates from the United States and Cuba, for example, held a "U.S.-Cuba youth exchange." The event featured a discussion on the campaign to demand freedom for the Cuban Five (see box on page 3).

A few thousand delegates visited several of Venezuela's provinces. Some 120 youth from Africa, the Americas, and Europe, for example, met peasants fighting for land in San Carlos, Cojedes state. They visited Paraima, an area where 832 peasant families occupied land seven years ago and have been fighting to win titles and low-interest credits. During the three-day program they also met with Venezuelans organizing literacy classes.

In Puerto La Cruz, Anzoátegui state, delegates got a feel for the expanding

Continued on page 7

Delegates in Caracas discuss fight for women's equality

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

CARACAS, Venezuela—The fight for women's equality was a major topic at the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students, which concluded here August 15. It was discussed at a number of seminars and workshops.

An August 10 conference on "Gender Equality and the Fight for Women's Rights around the World" was one of the best-attended events of the festival, with some 2,000 delegates taking part. A range of views were expressed in the discussion.

Vajiowa Tabelo of the African National Congress Youth League of South Africa, who chaired this session, opened the program by describing discrimination against women on the political, social, and economic levels. She remarked that few members of the festival's International Organizing Committee were women, while a much higher proportion of female delegates were asked to do organizational tasks. She also noted that most street vendors selling food in Caracas were women, while those peddling shoes or other goods were largely men. These are the result of stereotypes enforced by society, Tabelo added, without offering an explanation. She said this state of affairs doesn't make sense because women are capable physically and politically of doing the jobs they are largely excluded from.

Manuela Vereadora of the Communist Party of Brazil was the first panelist. Lamenting the "demise of the feminist movement" of the 1970s, she said the fight against women's oppression cannot be advanced substantially until socialism is in place.

Narim Manduga, a panelist from Palestine, pointed to former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and to Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, who in 1963 was the first woman in space, as role models for young women today. She also said women can play a bigger role in leading national liberation struggles.

Delsi Rodríguez, Venezuela's deputy foreign minister, presented many United Nations statistics showing that women around the world are second-class citizens. For example, two-thirds of the 920 million people who are illiterate worldwide are women, she said. Rodríguez asserted that Venezuela's "Bolivarian revolution is offering a way out" of this reality for women in this country. As proof she cited a phrase in the first article of Venezuela's new constitution saying that "justice and equality" are the right of all.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Ana López, a delegate from Cuba, speaks under discussion during August 10 conference on women's rights at 16th world youth festival in Caracas, Venezuela.

Annalucia Vermunt of the Young Socialists in New Zealand was also a panelist. She began by pointing to recent strikes by coal miners in New Zealand and the significance for the working class of women being in the mines today. "Women continue to be integrated into the workforce, and barriers to women and men working alongside each other as equals, performing the same jobs, are progressively being breached in both imperialist and semicolonial countries," Vermunt said, quoting from "Their Transformation and Ours," the first article in issue 12 of the Marxist magazine *New International.*

"Biology is not women's destiny," Vermunt said, noting that women's degradation arose with the emergence of social classes and will end when class society is abolished. "The capitalist class profits from women's oppression and has a material interest in maintaining it, while it's in the interests of working people to end such discrimination," said Vermunt. She described why a woman's right to choose abortion and affirmative action are essential demands in the fight for women's equality.

Vermunt pointed to the Cuban Revolution as an example of what is possible to achieve in the struggle for women's liberation when workers and farmers take state power, overthrow capitalism, and begin building a socialist society.

The presentations sparked discussion and debate. Ana López, a delegate from Cuba, expanded on Vermunt's final point by describing the rapid integration of women into the workforce since the 1959 revolution and other such gains in Cuba.

Delegates from Palestine, Vietnam, and Western Sahara emphasized the growing role of women in national liberation struggles.

One man from Venezuela argued against legalizing a woman's right to choose—a minority point of view at the conference. Abortion remains illegal in Venezuela.

Similar exchanges took place throughout the festival. Books on the struggle for women's liberation were popular at a number of booths at the festival's Friendship Fair. The Young Socialists stand sold out of the Spanish-language edition of the pamphlet *Abortion Is a Woman's Right* and related titles.

Aceh fighters reach accord with Indonesia

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The independence forces led by the Free Aceh Movement in western Indonesia will hand in their weapons and the Indonesian military will withdraw some 15,000 troops from the province of Aceh if an agreement signed August 15 is honored. Officials of the European Union are to monitor implementation of the pact.

Aceh has been the scene of military repression and a rebel insurgency for almost three decades. The Free Aceh Movement, or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), launched a guerrilla struggle for independence in 1976. Since then, tens of thousands of Indonesian troops deployed in the province have carried out several major offensives against some 5,000 lightly armed rebels, leading to a toll of up to 15,000 dead.

The repression has built sympathy for GAM among Aceh's population of 5 million, fueling demands for self-determination. A high point of popular mobilization came in November 1999, when hundreds of thousands rallied in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, to demand a referendum on the issue.

The tsunami that hit Asia in December provided the background to this year's talks. The waves hit Aceh with full force, killing 131,000 people. The impact was magnified by Indonesia's status as a semicolonial country exploited by imperialist powers. Among the victims were hundreds of rebel prisoners in two jails destroyed by waves.

The talks took place in Finland and were mediated by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari. The agreement states that over the next six months the Free Aceh Movement will gradually surrender their weapons and the armed forces will withdraw troops. The government says it will end up with 14,700 "local" security forces in Aceh, down from a total of 30,000 today.



AFP/Getty Images/Adek Berry

Some 500 people demonstrate May 11, 2004, in Jakarta against government repression in Aceh. The Free Aceh Movement has been fighting for independence from Indonesia.

In exchange for their weapons, GAM fighters are supposed to receive about five acres of land and supplies to help them become farmers or fishermen. The Acehnese will now be able to form local political parties that can compete in provincial elections within 18 months.

The agreement reiterates a 1999 commitment made—but not kept—"to allow Aceh to retain 70 percent of all revenues from oil, gas, and other resources," the *New York Times* reported August 15. The leeching of Aceh's wealth is a source of intense anger among poverty-stricken working people.

Free Aceh Movement representative Malik Mahmud, who signed the agreement, warned that militias organized and armed by the Indonesian military had threatened to continue their attacks. "If GAM defends itself against these militias it will be the excuse the military is looking for to relaunch military operations," he said.

"Our safety is now in the hands of [the] peace monitors," said another GAM spokesperson, Sofyan Dawood.

In a guest column published in the August 16 *International Herald Tribune*, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono observed that the agreement "was only reached after years of applying military force…. We are holding GAM to its pledge to drop its demand for independence."

U.S. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack gave the pact Washington's blessing. According to the Muslim American Society website, McCormack "played down concern expressed by GAM leaders that the [agreement] would still leave an unnecessarily large contingent of Indonesian troops in the province."

The Associated Press said the deal would "boost investor confidence, especially among mining and oil companies, who for years have had to pay enormous sums to Indonesian security forces to protect their operations…. A big winner could be U.S. oil giant ExxonMobil Corp." ExxonMobil has exploited Aceh's gas fields for more than three decades, with the state oil company as a junior partner.

The agreement hit an immediate snag August 18 when Indonesian opposition parties froze the release of 447 jailed rebel fighters, the first step in an agreed-upon amnesty for 1,500 prisoners. The opposition Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle said the freeze would remain in place until parliament approves the pact.

Youth festival

Continued from page 6

alliance between Cuba and Venezuela. They met Cuban doctors offering quality health care for free in working-class districts that have had no access to medical services before. Some 18,000 Cuban doctors and other medical personnel, along with another 10,000 Cuban volunteers—including sports trainers and agricultural specialists—now work in Venezuela. Delegates also met elderly Venezuelans who had returned from Cuba, where they underwent cataract and other operations to restore their eyesight. This program, called Mission Miracle, aims to offer such services to more than 100,000 Venezuelans. Many Venezuelan delegates who were part of that exchange are members of the Francisco de Miranda Front. The group encompasses tens of thousands of Venezuelan youth who have graduated from courses on social work in Cuba and have returned to practice what they've learned.

One of the most effective avenues for informal exchange was the Friendship Fair. Held at the Teresa Carreño theater in central Caracas, where some of the largest seminars took place, it included cultural performances and literature booths. It was also open to the public, while most festival events were open only to delegates.

Willie Cotton, Maura DeLuca, Natalie Doucet, and Olympia Newton contributed to this article.

Australia: workers strike Boeing shops at air base

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Fighting for a union contract, aircraft engineers (mechanics) and technicians have been picketing the Boeing workshops at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base at Williamtown since June 1. The 35 workers have set up picket shacks and banners at the main entrance to the base, three hours north of Sydney. Military police ordered them to shift some of the banners at the start of the picket but have kept their distance since then.

Boeing Australia does major services and modifications on the RAAF's 71 FA-18 Hornet fighter-bombers, most of which are based in Williamtown. Australian FA-18s were deployed in Iraq during the U.S.-led invasion.

Since the Air Force contracted out this work to Boeing four and a half years ago, the technicians there have been working under individual contracts, with wide differences in pay within the workshop, and lower pay and conditions than other aviation tradespeople, pickets said.

This is "the first picket line that I know of outside a military base in Australia," Adam Burgoyne told *Militant* reporters during a picket line visit August 14. This has to do with the fact that over the past decade the military has shifted to contracting out. Burgoyne was an aviation engineer in the Royal Australian Navy for eight years before starting, as a civilian, at Williamtown when Boeing won the Hornet servicing contract.

About half of the workshop is on strike, said Ben Swan, a national industrial officer with the Australian Workers' Union. The strike is effective. With Boeing struggling to keep up with the contract even before the strike, "they're hurting," he said.

In response to their picketing, the number of replacement workers Boeing had brought in from its workshop at the Amberley RAAF base near Brisbane has dwindled from 23 to 8, Burgoyne said.

With the federal Liberal-National Coalition government preparing new antiunion laws to further weaken collective bargaining, the leader of the opposition Australian Labor Party, Kim Beazley, has joined the "national unity" chorus in accusing the bosses of undermining the safety of "frontline fighters" by refusing to negotiate a union contract with the Hornet maintenance workers. AWU national secretary Bill Shorten said, "The government should not let its antiunion bias for individual contracts damage our national security."

In response, Prime Minister John Howard has declared his government's support for Boeing, saying that "what the company is doing is entirely lawful and entirely within its rights."

The fight against U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico

Below is an excerpt from Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity. *The English and Spanish-language editions of the pamphlet are among Pathfinder's Books of the Month for September. The booklet consists of two interviews with Puerto Rican independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda conducted by the* Militant *in 1998. Cancel Miranda is one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists who were imprisoned for participating in either the armed attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954 or President Truman's temporary residence at Blair House four years earlier. They became the longest-held political prisoners in the Americas. They were released in 1978 and 1979 in response to a broad international campaign on their behalf. Copyright © 1998 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BOOKS OF THE MONTH



Militant/Nancy Cole

Workers in San Juan, Puerto Rico, during general strike against privatization of telephone company, July 8, 1998. Sign reads, "No to the biggest robbery in history. No to the sale of the phone company."

BY RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA

We have to reach out to the greatest number of our people with the truth and the need for independence. Independence is not simply a nice ideal. It is a necessity.

We have to reach the new generations, so they will continue the struggle until the time comes when different forces in the world come together and strengthen our struggle. We are part of the world, and what happens all over the world affects our country.

The United States uses our young people as cannon fodder in their wars. In the Vietnam War, Puerto Rico had a disproportionately high number of casualties relative to its population compared to the United States. The same thing happened in the Korean War.

They sent us to kill Dominicans in the Dominican Republic in 1965. When they invaded Panama in 1989, they sent us to kill Panamanians, who are our brothers and sisters.

Before the Gulf War, nobody here knew who Saddam Hussein was. But in one week they got the Puerto Rican people to hate Saddam Hussein, through their control of the media, and then everyone was saying that Saddam was the devil.

I asked on the radio the other day, "What are Puerto Ricans doing in Bosnia?" If Rockefeller wants to send his sons to fight in Bosnia, let him do it. But he's not going to send his sons to Bosnia. He's going to send your sons, the sons of John Doe and Mary Jane.

So young people are affected by this colonial reality.

We have to show workers why independence is in their interests as workers: so they can be the owners of their country and their factories, so they can be the owners of what they produce. So that everything doesn't end up in the coffers of Wall Street. So that it stays here for their development.

We have to explain what annexation would mean. If Puerto Rico were to be made a state, they would treat us exactly like they treat our communities in New York, Connecticut, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

When I got out of prison in 1979, I told my people from the beginning that we're going to end up on reservations like the Indians if we're not an independent country. It's happening. I could take you to housing projects, in nearby Mayagüez, where thousands of Puerto Rican families live, and which have been turned into reservations. They have them fenced in and access is controlled by the police and the National Guard. You have to identify yourself to enter and leave your home. They search your car as if you were in prison.

As Pedro Albizu Campos said sixty years ago, if we don't free ourselves, we will go from being masters to being serfs, from being owners to being squatters. And right now we Puerto Ricans are squatters in our own country. Others are in charge, not us.

Who controls the Customs in Puerto Rico? The U.S. does. They control our commerce, both foreign and domestic trade. Who controls immigration? The U.S. does. To leave Puerto Rico for another country, we must ask permission from the U.S. State Department. Even this little colonial governor, [Pedro] Rosselló, has to ask their permission.

It is for the same reasons that we Nationalists do not believe in plebiscites, because the U.S. controls the colonial elections. They use elections to cover up our colonial status and pretend there is democracy. But they control everything here, even the military. They are occupying our country militarily. Under these conditions—when you have a gun aimed at your head, and when they control your life socially, politically, and economically—there can be no free vote.

We Nationalists say: first, transfer all powers to the Puerto Rican people. Demilitarize our country. Remove all U.S. military bases and repressive agencies from Puerto Rico, and then we'll decide.

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EDITORIALS

Social disaster on U.S. Gulf Coast

The degree of the disaster unfolding in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama after Hurricane Katrina is unnecessary. This is a social catastrophe due to the disregard for human life by state and federal authorities. The impact of Katrina stands in sharp contrast to the result of a similar hurricane in July that hit Cuba—an island nation near the U.S. Gulf Coast, with much less wealth, but with a revolutionary government of workers and farmers.

When Louisiana authorities ordered the evacuation of New Orleans, the population of half a million was left to fend for itself. Those relying on public transportation were stranded. The federal government did not organize to fly people out in the 24 hours prior to the storm hitting land when evacuation by air was still possible. In the rush out of the city, those with access to resources faired far better than working people, as is always the case in a capitalist country divided into social classes.

The women, men, and children who waited for hours to find shelter in New Orleans' Superdome were subjected to humiliating searches as rains began to drench them. Razor blades, nail clippers, and other items used for basic hygiene were taken from them by National Guard troops. This affront to human dignity goes hand in hand with the treatment by state governments and their troops of desperate people seeking water, soda, or food as criminal "looters."

In Mississippi, where the eye of the storm hit, there was even less of an organized evacuation attempt than Louisiana. Tens of thousands of structures were flattened and the death toll is rising. While every layer of the population was affected, the impact is crushing for workers and small farmers in one of the country's poorest states.

The response by the revolutionary government of Cuba has been starkly different. Evacuations of more than 1.5 million people were organized there in July during Hurricane Dennis and a year ago during Hurricane Ivan. The government and mass organizations—from the Federation of Cuban Women to trade unions and the Union of Young Communists—worked together to make such massive movements of people possible and effective. Collective action and human solidarity were aimed above all at protecting the health and welfare of all people first, and then safeguarding vital equipment and farm machinery. This included ensuring that everyone had water, food, and medical care. As a result, the human toll was minimal: zero last year after Ivan, and 16 in July after Dennis. After each storm the government helped mobilize people to repair the damage and rebuild rapidly.

Natural disasters can't be stopped. But what happens before, during, and after them is not inevitable. It wasn't foreordained that thousands would die in Katrina's path. Cuba shows what's possible when working people hold state power with a revolutionary leadership.

In the U.S. now, the labor movement should demand massive and immediate government relief, an end to the treatment of human beings in need as criminals, a moratorium on farm foreclosures in all affected areas, and a federally funded public works program to rebuild the destroyed housing and infrastructure quickly.

Class dynamics in occupied Iraq

Below are excerpts from "Their Transformation and Ours," a Socialist Workers Party resolution published in issue 12 of the Marxist magazine New International (see ad on page 7). *We are printing them because they describe the class dynamics in Iraq today. Copyright ©2005 by* New International. *Reprinted by permission.*

There is a difference between problems the imperialist rulers face due to mistakes they can and will correct (underestimate them at your peril!), and those resulting from the dynamics of the world class struggle that they can affect to one degree or another but cannot avoid. The rout of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, as well as imperialism's devastating, decade-long squeeze on Iraq topped off by the 2003 invasion, put the writing on the wall for governments and other bourgeois forces from North Africa through Southeast Asia that were at odds with U.S. imperialism….

The government that emerges from the January 30, 2005, Iraqi elections will have to balance the increasingly autonomous Kurdistan Region in the north and rival political forces from within the Shiite majority and Sunni minority. The Baathist regime was based among sectors of the Sunni population with a vested class interest in preserving the minority privileges whose consolidation was bestowed on them by British imperialism. Among the bloodiest dictatorships in Middle East history, over its more than thirty-five years in power it systematically organized the wholesale slaughter of dissenting Baathist forces, Communist Party members and those accused of being communists, along with Shiite and Kurdish leaders.…

The Bush administration in November 2004 relaunched the war in Iraq to consolidate power over the Baathist stronghold in the center of the country…. U.S. forces conducted this stage in the war with little opposition among the Shia population, who have themselves been targets for decades of Baathist terror, bombings, and assassinations. U.S. operations also enjoyed overwhelming support in Kurdish regions. Despite deep wells of hatred among the Iraqi toilers for the imperialist occupiers, the detested Baathist forces and their allies who are waging the war they didn't fight in 2003 are antagonistic to and incapable of mobilizing and leading a revolutionary national liberation struggle in Iraq.... A telling confirmation of this fact has been the stunning absence of any broad outpouring of opposition to the imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq in the Middle East….

The unintended consequence of the imperialists' course, however, is to open up space in Iraq and throughout the region for the working class and peasants to organize and fight to advance their interests…for oppressed nations such as the Kurds…for the fight to advance women's rights.… That is the future the imperialists can do nothing to avoid.

Support Militant Fighting Fund

Continued from front page

in retaliation with a groundless suit, hoping it would intimidate the workers and their supporters and bleed them financially. The targets of the lawsuit include the UMWA, several miners, the *Militant* and two Utah dailies that have covered the union fight. Unionists and other workers who have endorsed the Militant Fighting Fund are doing so to lend support to the miners and the UMWA. They are also defending the right of a newspaper published in the interests of working people to report the miners' side of the story in this union battle and to extend editorial support to the miners.

Motions to dismiss the coal bosses' harassment case were recently filed in court by the *Militant* and the other two papers. A hearing on these motions is expected early this fall. The next six to eight weeks prior to the hearing offer an opportunity to reach out as broadly as possible for further backing, in the trade union movement especially. Joining in the efforts to organize solidarity in action for the striking mechanics, cleaners, and custodians at Northwest Airlines provides added openings to win support for the Militant Fighting Fund. The coming Labor Day events can also be a focal point for the next steps in this campaign.

'Militant' publication schedule

This week's *Militant* is a two-week issue. We will not publish September 7. The next issue will be published September 14.

Proposed constitution for Iraq to go to polls

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Iraq's National Assembly accepted without a vote a constitution from a drafting commission August 29, despite the fact that representatives of Sunni-based political forces opposed the document. Sunni politicians vowed to defeat the proposed constitution in a referendum set for October 15.

Washington has been pushing to get the constitution adopted as part of its goal of establishing a relatively stable pro-U.S. regime in Baghdad. U.S. officials played a major role in the process of drafting the text and negotiating between different factions to win their agreement.

Sunni Arabs on the constitutional negotiating committee objected to provisions that would make Iraq a federal state allowing for the creation of an autonomous region in the predominantly Shiite south. An autonomous region in the largely Kurdish area in the north already exists. They also oppose a provision that would ban the former ruling Baath party, arguing that it would bar many Sunnis from public life.

According to press reports, compromise language submitted to Sunni politicians declares Iraq a federal state but postpones details of its implementation to a future decision by the National Assembly.

Leaders of the ruling government coalition, an electoral bloc of Kurdish and Shiite-led parties, said the ban on the Baath party would apply only to what they called the "Saddamist" branch.

The Hussein regime maintained its power partly by fostering divisions between Sunni and Shiite Arabs and Kurds. The latter two groups both faced discrimination while Sunnis were offered job patronage and other relative privileges. Wealthy Sunni Arabs were the main beneficiaries of that capitalist regime and are now the backbone of financing and organizing groups carrying out armed attacks against U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces.

Many Sunni politicians say they will campaign to defeat the constitution in the October 15 referendum. That would require a two-thirds vote against the document in any three of Iraq's 18 provinces.

In the majority-Sunni town of Tikrit, some 2,000 protesters rallied August 29 to denounce the proposed constitution. They demonstrated outside the offices of the Association of Muslim Scholars, a leading Sunni clerical group that opposes the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Some carried posters of Hussein and of the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who also opposes the draft constitution. Similar rallies have been held in other cities and towns with a large Sunni population.

Bahrain's *Gulf Daily News* said 100,000 Iraqis marched in eight cities to protest lack of electricity, water, and other social services, and to oppose the draft constitution. About 20,000 marched in Sadr City, a working-class district of Baghdad. The protests were organized by supporters of al-Sadr, who has opposed the draft constitution as part of an ongoing struggle with rival parties for influence in the predominantly Shiite regions.

The power struggle between al-Sadr and leaders of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of the main Shiite-based groups represented in the National Assembly, spilled over into armed clashes in mid-August. According to press reports, militias loyal to al-Sadr and those organized by SCIRI fought each other in several cities. At an August 25 press conference al-Sadr called for an end to that conflict.

Meanwhile, the regional parliament in Iraqi Kurdistan approved, under some pressure from Washington, the draft constitution, although it fell short of Kurdish demands to include oil-rich Kirkuk in its autonomous region. Adnan al-Mufti, head of the Kurdish regional parliament, said, "Although the draft is not up to our expectations, it represents a big step for us in this period," reported Agence France-Presse.

Kurds took advantage of the weakening of the Hussein regime following the 1991 U.S.-led war against Iraq to establish an autonomous Kurdish region. The leading Kurdish parties have allied themselves with the U.S. government in exchange for Washington's toleration of a degree of Kurdish autonomy.

A provision in the draft that establishes Islam as the basis of Iraqi law will not apply in the Kurdish region, according to a *Washington Post* report.